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VOLUME XXXII — May 17, 1954 — NUMBER 30

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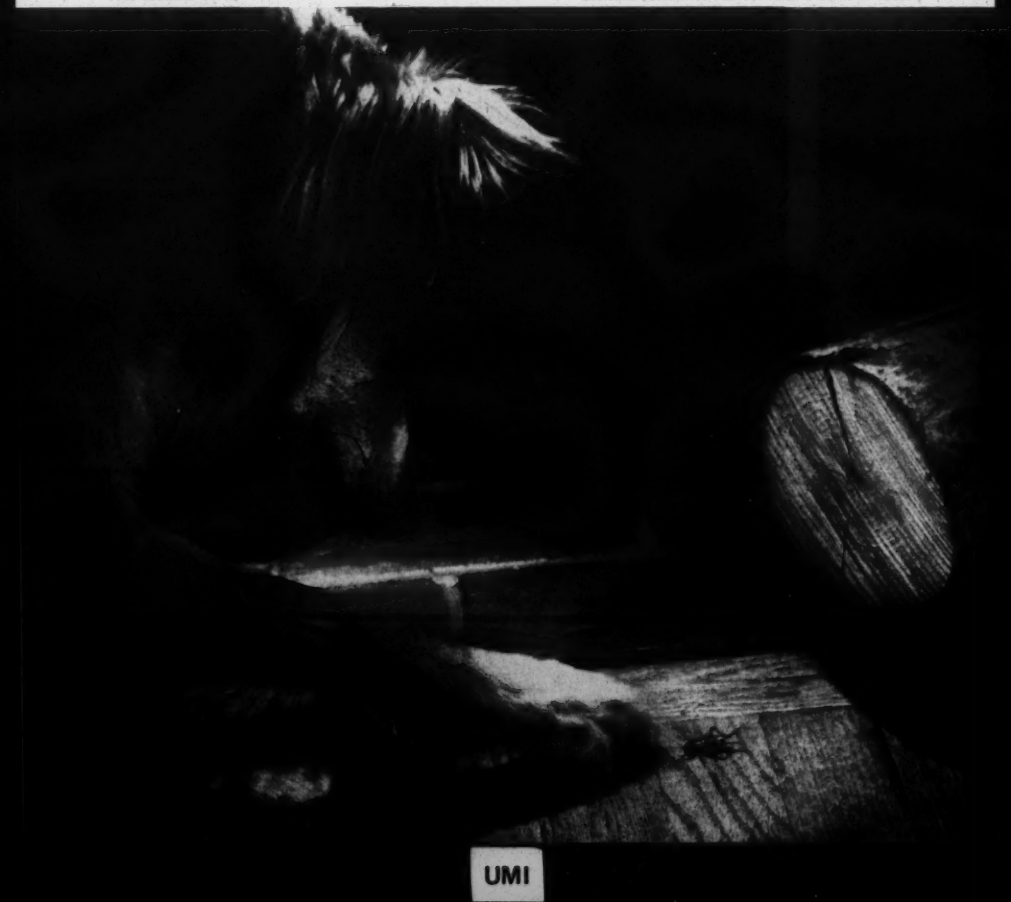
IMPORTANT NOTICE

Did you receive a RENEWAL BLANK with this issue? If so, it means that your subscription expires on this date. Please fill it out and return it promptly. This will insure your getting the GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS when publication resumes after the summer vacation. This is the last issue of the BULLETINS until October 4.

Cricket on the Hearth Intrigues Lassie—Though considered a symbol of good luck, the insect of the cheery chirp joins many other six-legged vandals in destroying property man regards as his own.

(SEE BULLETIN NO. 1)

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER WILLARD R. CULVER



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Dr. Asa Fitch, the New York appointee, wrote, "I sometimes think there is no kind of mischief going on in the world of nature around us but that some insect is at the bottom of it." His plan was to compile exhaustive reports completely identifying "every American insect which is at present known as being an injurious species."

Dr. Fitch estimated that he could finish the job in a normal lifetime only by cutting his sleep to five hours a night. Often he allowed himself less. He filled the little office near his residence in Salem, New York, with specimens and books. It soon came to be known as "Fitch's Bughouse." His many scholarly works on insects won international fame.

First Federal Entomologist—Townsend Glover in Washington was assigned one small room in the United States Patent Office. His duties: "Collecting information on seeds, fruits, and insects of the United States." He foresaw the grave danger of importing pests on foreign seeds and plants. From his small start grew one of the key activities of the Department of Agriculture, created eight years later.

Insects outnumber all other living things on earth and have survived millions of years. Fortunately for man, "Bugs have other bugs to bite 'em, and so on *ad infinitum*." If only one pair of ordinary houseflies and their offspring survived one full season, they would multiply to 191 quintillion flies. This untidy family would weigh nine and a half trillion tons and take up 110½ quadrillion cubic feet of space.

Modern sanitation and insecticides aid in the constant man-bug battle. But despite the advances of the past 100 years, it is estimated that insect pests cost Uncle Sam more than four billion dollars a year. This amount equals the retail value of every item sold in a year by Sears and Montgomery Ward combined. It goes down the drain in lost crops, ruined fruit, flowers, and lawns, destroyed clothing (moths), and undermined dwellings (termites). The damage nullifies the efforts of a million working men annually. By spreading disease, mosquitoes and other insects take workers from jobs and even carry death. As simple pests and nuisances, bugs add immeasurably to the world's woe.

Helpful Insects—On the other hand, some insects help man. Bees produce honey and wax and carry pollen. Silkworms make silk. Certain insects are sources of food in various parts of the world. Dyes and shellac are made from others. Crickets sing (illustration, cover).

There are numerous Biblical references to insects. During the middle ages they were not regarded as a Divine creation, as were man and most animals. They were thought to have sprung directly from the air, or from refuse or damp earth. Instances are recorded of the church's excommunicating them. Courts even prosecuted insects for property destruction, sometimes banishing them or sentencing them to death.

References—For additional information, see "Crickets, Nature's Expert Fiddlers," in *The National Geographic Magazine*, September, 1953; "Rip Van Winkle of the Underground," July, 1953; "Report from the Locust Wars," April, 1953; "Back-yard Monsters in Color," August, 1952; "Dragonflies—Rainbows on the Wing," August, 1951; "Torchbearers of the Twilight," May, 1951; and numerous other articles listed under Insects in the *Cumulative Index to the National Geographic Magazine*.

See also, in the GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS, January 4, 1954, "Butterfly Merits 'Flying Flower' Nickname"; and "Busy Bees Have Good and Bad Habits," Dec. 7, 1953.

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BUBLEY, STANDARD OIL CO. OF N.J.

This Is Asking for It!—A scientist lets mosquitoes bite him so they will live until he wants them to die in an insecticide test.

Bulletin No. 1, May 17, 1954

Bug-Battlers Mark 100 Years

The bugcatchers have been at work 100 years. Some 1,500 entomologists and associated "bugologists" plan to gather in Washington, D. C., in mid-June to mark a century of warfare against destructive insects.

Aristotle first used the term "entomology." It means literally "cut into pieces," and refers to natural incisions in insect bodies. The science grew through the ages. On June 14, 1854, the United States appointed Townsend Glover the first Federal entomologist. At about the same time New York became the first State to name a bug-control man.

Insects: Man's Chief Rival—Entomologists were not added to official payrolls out of idle curiosity about bugs, but because men were learning that insects represented the most serious threat to man's control of the earth. They also deplored the untold damage to forests, fruit trees, field crops, and other natural resources.

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